

# ONLY IN TRIESTE

A Guide to Unique Locations,  
Hidden Corners and Unusual Objects

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## 24 Sleeping with History

**District IV (Centro Storico 1), some historic hotels including the Savoia Excelsior Palace at Riva del Mandracchio 4**

Trieste's historic hotels fall into two groups: those built specifically as hotels and those in buildings created originally for a different purpose. Either way, Trieste's Austrian-built architecture lends these hotels a distinct *hauteur*. These were buildings designed as much for show as for comfort.

One *grande dame* hotel represents perfectly the first group. The magnificent Savoia Excelsior Palace at Riva del Mandracchio 4 (District IV) was completed in 1911 to a design by Vienna-based architect Ladislaus Fiedler. Built on the site of the demolished Imperial Maritime Government building, which in turn occupied land reclaimed from the sea, Fiedler deployed the Zublin System of iron pilings to ensure a decent foundation for the massive building. Considered one of the most modern hotels in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with an elevator and reinforced concrete balconies, the Savoia Excelsior Palace soon served as a model for other hotels.

The hotel's first guests were dignitaries attending the launch of the *Viribus Unitis*, the Austro-Hungarian Navy's new flagship, in the presence of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914). Thereafter, the clientele



Elegance awaits at the Savoia Excelsior Palace Hotel

mainly comprised passengers from luxury liners berthed opposite at the Molo del Bersaglieri. Lavish balls were staged regularly at the hotel and it is said that even the smallest corridors were wide enough to accommodate two ladies in ball gowns walking side by side!

On 3rd November 1918, the destroyer *Audace* docked at the nearby Molo San Carlo. It was the first Italian vessel to arrive after Trieste had been given up by the Austrians, and the pier was renamed in its honour. General Carlo Petitti di Roreto (1862–1933) disembarked and in the name of King Victor Emmanuel III of the House of Savoy (1869–1947) he took possession of the city for Italy. Henceforth the hotel was known as the Savoia Excelsior Palace.

During a recent upgrade, the hotel's *Belle Époque* plasterwork, stained glass and wood panelling were restored to their original appearance, and new armchairs and crockery commissioned using original designs. This is no museum though since it also features an eco-friendly grey water recycling system, high efficiency thermal power plant, and LED lighting.

The second group of hotels, those housed in reused buildings, is well represented by several grand city centre properties (District IV). They include The Modernist at Corso Italia 12 inside the former late-19th century home of Istanbul-born doctor and philanthropist Gregorio Ananian (1770–1865), and the magnificent Double Tree within a former early-20th century insurance building at Piazza della Repubblica 1. Of particular interest is the Palace Suite at Via San Nicolò 34–36, which today contains luxury rental apartments. It was built originally in 1906 as the Palazzo Terni for the aristocrat Augusto Terni. Local architect Romeo Depaoli (1876–1916) gave the building one of Trieste's most impressive façades with a profusion of florid Liberty-style (*Art Nouveau*) decoration (see no. 17). Over the main entrance is an eye-catching circular window flanked by female figures, with further figures set along the roofline.

Also historic but with an ultra-modern twist is the Urban Design Hotel at Via Punta del Forno 3. This clutch of 18th century houses, built over Roman ruins of the 1st century AD, sports minimalist rooms in black and white, and public areas with funky furniture and modert art.

Scheduled to open in 2025 is the 160-room Trieste 25hours hotel in a huge late-19th-century building on Piazza Vittorio Veneto. Built in 1895 for the Austrian Lloyd Employee Pensions Institute, the five-storey building subsequently housed Austrian Railways, the consulates of Argentina, Norway and Portugal, and a Red Cross emergency room.

*Other locations nearby: 1, 22, 23, 25*













